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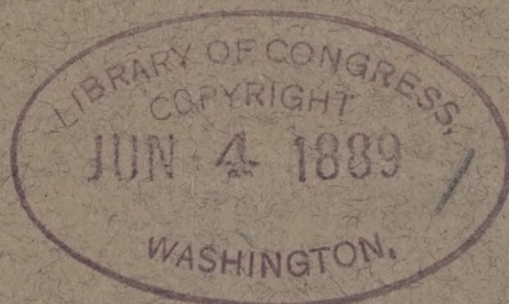
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# THE CURSE UPON MITRE SQUARE

A. D. 1530—1888.

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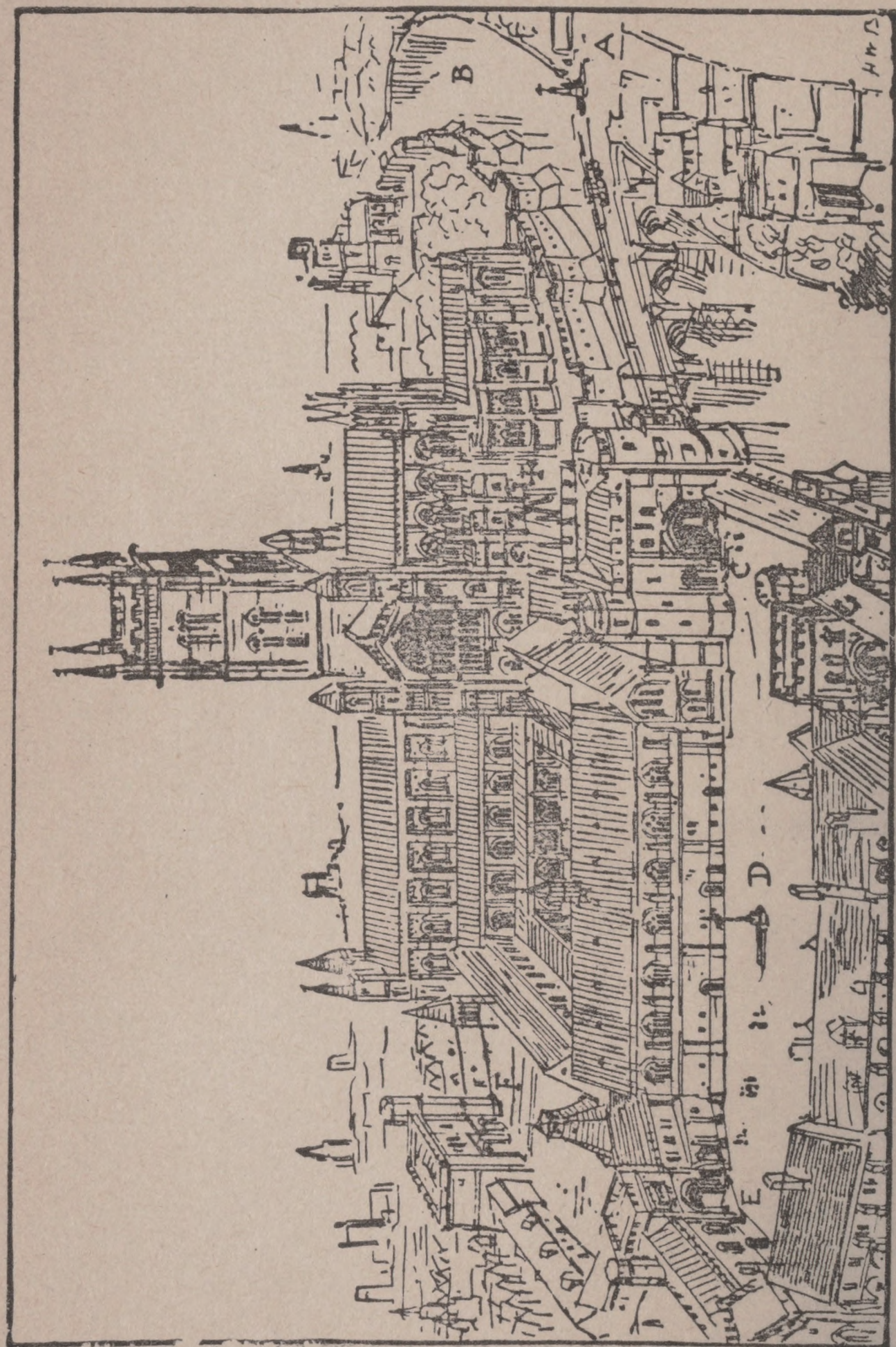
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ALDGATE IN THE DAYS OF HENRY VIII.

- A Aldgate Street Without.
- B Hound's Ditch—The City Moat.
- C Aldgate.
- D The Great Court at the Priory.
- E Gate leading to Leadenhall Street.
- F Gate leading to King Street.
- G Gate leading to the Jewry.
- H The Hermitage.
- + The site of the murders.

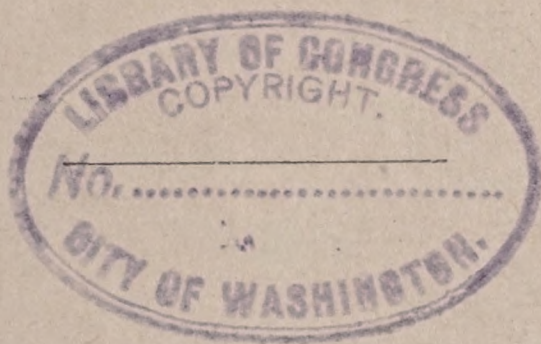


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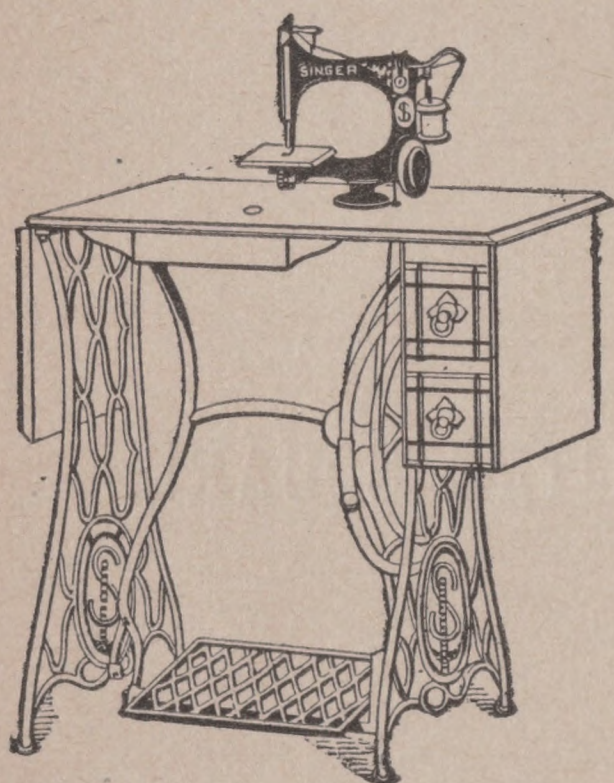
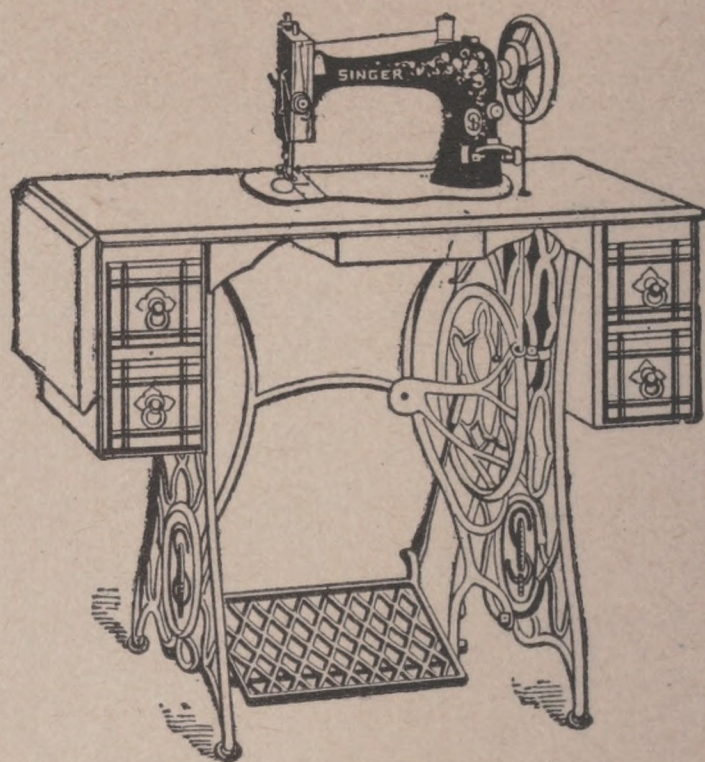
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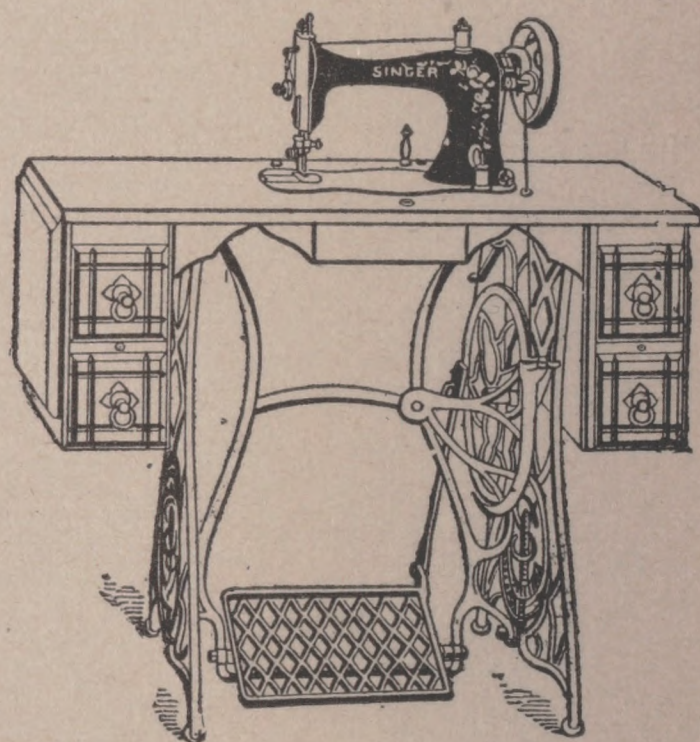
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# THE CURSE UPON MITRE SQUARE.



## BOOK I.

### THE TRAGEDIES IN THE CHURCH OF HOLY TRINITY, ALDGATE.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### THE NEOPHYTE.

**I**T was curious that, notwithstanding their power and wealth, their well acknowledged munificence, and their good fortune in other respects, the monks of Holy Trinity Church, Aldgate, were but ill at ease in the year of grace 1530. All that monks wished for they possessed. The Priory was, with the exception of Westminster, the most superb monastic institution in Middlesex. In its revenues were included the whole ward of Portsoken, four parish churches acknowledged its authority, and its privileges far exceeded those of any institution of the like kind, with the one exception named above.



It is true that its wealth had been in former times even greater, and its sway over a portion of the city more undisputed; but still so much remained, so much glory and magnificence still adhered to the monastery, that it was strange the forty monks should have cause for apprehension.

These monks were of the order of canons regular, and with greater power and greater wealth than fell to the lot of other monasteries, they, notwithstanding, escaped the open hostility of the king and his nobles. This being the case, it is plain that they were charitable and popular with their parishioners. Had any scandal attached to the Priory or its inmates, had its revenues been ill-managed, or the poor of the district adjoining cause for complaint that their wants were not attended to, then certain is it that the rapacious King Hal and his still more rapacious nobles would have marked it for destruction. Such, however, was not the case; neither king nor nobles dared lay hand on so useful and popular an institution, and Prior and monks reigned supreme, safe from the temporal power which feared to touch them.

The monks were, however, unhappy, and knew well the cause of their uneasiness. In the beginning of the year a rumour had reached the Prior that one of the forty had been seen in an adjoining church under very suspicious circumstances. What these were the Prior did not deem fit to mention; all he attempted was to discover the delinquent who was so likely to bring discredit on his fellows. This was



no easy matter, and the conduct of the forty being, as a rule, so exemplary, the Prior—easy-going, weak-minded man that he was—soon abandoned his search, and dismissed the rumour as unfounded.

Viewed from the events which afterwards occurred, it was a great misfortune to the monastery of Holy Trinity that Prior Handcock was at this juncture its chief. Not that the Prior was a bad man; his faults were not those which would disgrace an ordinary individual, but they were eminently such as incapacitated him for rule. He was very unsuspicious, very frightened of an intellect superior to his own, and very liable to favouritism. The forty monks were, taking them as a body, a strong-minded, intellectual, and hard-headed set, and consequently he feared making his authority felt. It is, however, but fair to Handcock to mention that the men were apparently as good as they were clever, and performed cheerfully the by no means easy tasks allotted to them.

The Prior's favourite was generally the man who had last entered the monastery, and who came fresh from the pleasures, cares, and turmoils of life. There was much that was cheering in this habit of the Prior, and it often turned out well. The tranquillity, the freedom from petty worries, the probabilities of future reward, the even tenor of the monkish life, were put before the young man with no little eloquence by the kind Prior, and the youth felt satisfied, and stifled any wish to return to the world and its wicked ways. But there was also a



danger in this partiality. Handcock would never recognise that of all his flock the latest comer was the most liable to err; never could he bring himself to believe that the neophyte might not be a saint; the young man was never suspected, a cloak of protection was thrown over him, and he felt secure from punishment. Now if the neophyte was a good man, as of course was generally the case, all was well; if, however, as must sometimes happen in every institution, he was a black sheep, his misdeeds were often undiscovered and, if possible, overlooked, and thereby likely to bring great disgrace on the monastery.

In the year before this narrative commences a young man of great promise entered the Priory of Holy Trinity. His appearance attracted attention, and when he conversed he infatuated his hearers with the eloquence and charm of his discourse.

Of spare frame, though not short, he looked delicate, but the head bespoke great power, and told of strong passion, and no unusual capacity for good or evil.

Martin, for such was his name, was very dark, with thick black hair, eyebrows that met and gave to the face a somewhat sinister look, which was partly corrected by the perfectly straightforward-looking blue eyes, which is occasionally seen in very dark persons. The nose was aquiline, but too thin, and the mouth, the worst feature in the face, firmly closed and not unfrequently hidden by the hand. This was the more curious, as Martin



possessed the whitest teeth imaginable, beautiful in their regularity and perfection.

When not conversing Martin's appearance gave the impression of an intellect debased by cunning and evil passion; when, however, he spoke, his eloquence and manner dispelled this, and intellect only was discernible.

Such was the neophyte and favoured *protégé* of Prior Handcock. Great pains were taken to interest Martin in his new duties, but at first no special work was allotted to him. The monks realised that he was no ordinary man, and though, as a rule, they did not favour new comers, they for once approved the Prior's selection of a favourite, and regarded him as the coming light of the monastery.

It was soon evident that Martin's career would be that of a preacher, and so well did he work and so exemplary was his character, that the Prior, after consulting the other monks, decided that the more onerous duties should be waived in order that he might pursue such studies that would befit him for an orator.

Martin progressed very rapidly under the treatment of the good monks, and made himself a great master of rhetoric. His natural polish of manner and silvery voice held him in good stead, and his expressive face emphasised the thoughts that he uttered.

The Prior, however, discovered that his young *protégé* took but little interest in the works of the Fathers, and made tardy progress in theology.



Everything was done to make Martin conversant with the burning questions of the day ; no pains were spared to enlist his sympathy and talents in the religious cause in which all were interested, but to no avail. Martin listened to his instructors, apparently pondered over what they said, but was dull and sullen when theology, dogma, or the great cause were subjects of their counsel. The Prior perceiving the uselessness of his instruction at last gave way, and allowed his pupil to pursue his study of rhetoric according to his bent, but insisted that he should possess a fair knowledge of theology before being allowed to preach in public in the great church of Holy Trinity.

Martin's companions were, as we have stated, intellectual and good men ; they performed their routine duties, both religious and temporal, in a manner which brought credit on themselves and happiness on their flock ; but at the time in which this narrative is cast an unscrupulous and very able monarch hungered for the wealth of this most wealthy monastery, and it was said that he was only waiting for a fitting opportunity to stretch forth his greedy hand and grasp the prize.

The king employed dirty men to do his dirty work, and many of his tools possessed the wily cunning and insatiable thirst for gold which distinguished their master.

Foremost among these men was Thomas Audley, Speaker of the House of Commons, to whom the king was in debt and anxious to repay. Audley had



an old grudge against the Priory of Holy Trinity, and had bargained with the king that should an opportunity occur and the monastery be suppressed, the proceeds should go to paying off this old debt.

The enmity of Audley was well known to the monks, who recognised in him their secret foe ; but they felt no alarm so long as their reputation stood high with the people of the city.

Such was the condition of affairs when the strangest rumour reached the ears of the Prior. The monks were not told the nature of this rumour at first ; all they knew was that, if true, it boded ill to them, and Prior Handcock, like all unsuspecting and weak men, stuck obstinately to his insane determination of keeping the information secret from the monks, and after awhile dismissed the rumour as unfounded.

In such fashion was laid the foundation for the ghastly tragedies and inhuman wickedness which have stamped one small portion of the site of Holy Trinity Church with the curse of Cain.



## CHAPTER II.

## THE STOLEN MEETING.

ALMOST facing the Abbey Church and spacious monastic buildings of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, but separated from them by Houndsditch—at the time of this narrative a broad stream of water—was a row of dwelling-houses, with gabled roofs and gardens at the back.

In one of these there dwelt a woman of about thirty, whose manner was so reserved, and ostracism from her neighbour so complete, that she was viewed with suspicion, and would certainly have been forced to live elsewhere but for the fact that she was reputed to be under the special protection of a high official of the Court.

This woman's life appeared to be quite purposeless, with the exception that twice a week she received messages from the hands of a page, to whom she delivered answers for her mysterious correspondent. The people in the neighbouring houses watched the woman's movements with intense interest, and argued rightly that she was the accomplice in some fell purpose; the livery of the page, however, protected her, and whatever may have been the scheme in which she was



engaged, it was matured without interruption from the neighbouring inmates.

This prying curiosity, though it stopped short of open enmity, left no stone unturned to discover the reason of the mysterious woman's secrecy and the nature of her scheme. She was watched night and day, but beyond the advent and departure of the page nothing was found out.

After awhile, however, their watching was rewarded by an event which, though it increased their curiosity, protected the woman still further from insult.

One evening in January, in the year 1530, when the snow lay thick upon the ground, it was noticed that a man, after leaving his horse in a neighbouring hostelry, approached the dwellings by a circuitous route as if to avoid notice, and after a careful searching look to see that he was unobserved, let himself into the house where the strange woman lived. Notwithstanding his precautions, every circumstance of the visit was noted by the neighbours, the stealthy appearance, the length of the interview, and the height and general appearance of the man himself. His departure was effected in the same stealthy manner, but on arriving at the hostelry a surprise was in store for him ; the trapping and saddle of his horse had been removed, and no particulars of the robbery could be given by anyone.

The visit was repeated at irregular intervals, and always in the same stealthy fashion, the only difference being that the man altered his attire to that of



a peasant ; whereas on the first occasion he had been richly apparelled. He also came on foot—a precaution evidently considered necessary from the robbery of the saddle. Owing to the poor lighting of the road and the fear to approach too near, none had seen the man's face sufficiently well to enable them to again recognise it ; a fact which the inhabitants greatly deplored, but consoled themselves with the possession of the stolen saddle, and thought that by its means the name and position of the singular visitor would be made known to them.

After the fourth visit, which took place in broad daylight, the man and woman left the house together, and, avoiding the bridge opposite the monastery and Ald Gate, turned to the right and crossed Houndsditch by the bridge of Bishop's Gate, some little distance off.

This circumstance, though apparently not of great importance, greatly exercised the minds of the watchers, and suggested to them that whatever the secret was, the pair wished to avoid the monks.

That this may not be unintelligible to readers, they must know that (see frontispiece) Ald Gate was an approach to the monastery, through a courtyard of which it would be necessary to pass in order to gain access to the city. Now, the fact that the pair avoided this route and took the longer one over Bishop's Gate Bridge, was proof that they did not wish to be seen by the inmates of the monastery. After crossing Bishop's Gate Bridge the pair escaped the vigilance of the watchers.



Bearing to the left, the route taken was along Bishopsgate Street, through St. Mary Axe into Leadenhall Street, passing the stately tower of St. Mary Undershaft, when finally they approached the little church of St. Catherine Cree, adjoining the Abbey buildings.

The man showed a warrant and was allowed to ascend the tower of this church, which commands a good view of the cloisters and outbuildings of Holy Trinity. The singular part of the affair was that the woman was allowed to accompany him; a very rare privilege, and one which could only have been granted by reason of the importance of the warrant or the high official position of the man himself.

The monks were at recreation in the cloisters, but after awhile emerged into the open court, and the man who had impatiently awaited for this event, pointed them out to his companion and bade her watch intently. In little groups the monks marched slowly to the transept door of the great church, which, when opened, emitted the solemn strains of the distant organ.

The man again grew impatient. It was evident he was watching for one who had not yet appeared. As far as was possible, from the distance he scrutinised the face of each monk, and as the last two figures emerged into the court he awoke the flagging interest of his companion, and bade her mark the younger of the two.

Martin was engaged in serious converse with the Prior. The strongly-marked features were quite



visible from the tower, and the woman, after gazing at him earnestly for about a minute, satisfied her companion that she could not forget the face. On descending the tower the pair immediately separated and went in opposite directions.

After the event just recorded the woman frequently attended the services in the great monastic church, and had the worshippers been less devout and attended less to their prayers, they might have noticed that her gaze was invariably fixed on the neophyte whenever he was present, all his movements being watched with unflagging interest.

Not only did the woman attend the church in service time, still more frequently was she there on less public occasions, especially in the mornings and evenings, when the monks were reciting their offices, such as Prime, Mattins, etc. But whether the church was full or empty, her interest was centred on Martin. For him and him alone did she attend the Church of Holy Trinity.

Several months elapsed before the scheme progressed one jot. Many times did the mysterious man visit his accomplice. Long consultations they had together, but apparently nothing came of them. Evidently the intention of the woman was to get Martin by himself, probably to speak to him; but this was difficult to accomplish. When engaged in their temporal duties the monks went their respective ways, one to one occupation and a second to another, and so on. But Martin being the youngest, and in training, had no mission entrusted



to him. The monks were generally together when in church; one hour a week, however, each spent in solitary prayer before the altar, and the woman when she discovered this resolved to note the hour and wait till Martin's turn came, and thus obtain an interview.

She found, in addition, that these hours for solitary prayer were fixed, that is to say, each monk knew beforehand when his time would come to betake himself to the church to offer up his devotions before the high altar. Six times did the woman enter the church to be disappointed, but on the seventh she was more fortunate, and saw Martin in the sanctuary alone, but to her dismay a few people remained in the church and frustrated her design. And after waiting patiently for an hour, longing for them to depart, she saw the neophyte go back into the monastery, and thus again was she foiled in her purpose.

For a week the church was free from her evil presence, but in the following week, on the same day and the same hour, she betook herself to the place of quest, confident now of ultimate success.

It was late in the evening, nearly eight o'clock and quite dark, but the woman needed no light. She knew her way as well as the most saintly of worshippers, and as she approached the church, the moon, which had been obscured, suddenly reappeared and lit up the stately magnificence of the building, and in spite of herself the woman paused and gazed upon the scene. As big as a cathedral,



cruciform in shape, and of perfect symmetry, the monster church of Holy Trinity was, with the exception of the Abbey of Westminster and the Cathedral of St. Paul, the finest building of the metropolis. Mysterious and solemn it looked on this night, and the great tower, with that almost human expression, seemed to bid her to depart and not disturb its venerable presence. The woman wavered a minute in her resolution, but stifling her scruples she entered the church and saw the young monk kneeling in the sanctuary. Again she wavered, so awe-inspiring were the surroundings ; the great massive pillars supporting the rounded arches of the Norman nave, the symmetrical grace of the late Gothic clerestory, the long decorated chancel, with the solitary figure bending in prayer just visible in the gloom, composed a picture of such impressiveness that she could but wish that another had been entrusted with the work.

She approached the sanctuary, and the rustle of her dress disturbed Martin, who looked round, displeased at the interruption ; she beckoned to him, and, his curiosity awakened, the monk responded and went to the steps of the sanctuary. Perceiving, however, that the woman was not in want of help, and suddenly remembering his duty and the suspicious nature of the woman's approach, he was about to retire, when she removed the head-dress which had partly concealed her features, and Martin was instantly struck with the remarkable similarity of her face to his own.



The same black hair, the same aquiline nose and firmly sealed lips, and, still more remarkable, she had that habit of shielding the mouth before and after speech which he had so vainly tried to cure himself of when studying rhetoric. He asked her what she wanted of him, when, taking from her mantle a small scroll of parchment, she handed it to him, and bade him attend her on the morrow in the church of St. Catherine Cree hard by. Having delivered her message, the woman disappeared, leaving Martin astonished and nervous at so curious an interruption to his meditation.

The monk felt it his duty to take no notice of the summons and destroy the scroll, but he was seized with overmastering curiosity to read it, and then determined to attend the woman on the morrow—a fatal resolve, pregnant with terrible consequences to himself, and still more terrible consequences to others.

On the following day the inhabitants of the gabled houses, ever on the alert whenever the doings of their mysterious neighbour were concerned, descried her again leaving her home with her companion, and this time they resolved that the pair should not escape them. The saddle and trappings had given rise to great discussion, and more than one person had suggested a name for the owner, but the discussions were conducted in secret, a necessary precaution in those troubled times. The liberty of the subject was little understood in those days, the power of the king was almost unlimited, the Court



was subservient and corrupt, the nobles plotted one against the other, and the party favoured by the king invariably gained the upper hand. The people wisely held aloof from politics, were time-serving to a degree, and accepted changes without murmur. Woe to the man who questioned the doings of a king's favourite. If noble, his estate was in danger; if commoner, his life! Bluff King Hal ruled with an iron hand, and was not too scrupulous in his dealings.

In fear and trembling one or two of the boldest followed the mysterious couple and tracked them to the church of St. Catherine Cree, where the woman had arranged to meet the monk. None dared to follow into the church, and were about to depart, when a muffled figure brushed past them and stealthily took the same direction as the other two. Though the people stood in awe of the man who visited their silent neighbour, judging him to be some noble or State official, they did not fear this muffled figure, so quickly going back to the entrance of the church, they faced him before he could evade them. Notwithstanding his attempts to shield his features, they recognised the monk, whose appearance was well known to them, though they were ignorant of his name.

Now that an inmate of the monastery should be so evidently in league with the suspicious pair much puzzled them; perhaps after all no harm was meant. Had they not better abandon their watchings? But why had the monk shielded his features and avoided



their scrutiny? They went home and pondered over these things, and concluded to warn the Prior, and after discussing the best means of doing so, decided that the meeting of the monk in the church of St. Catherine Cree should be told, but no mention made of the strange man, as it might bring trouble upon them.

In such fashion, and not very intelligibly stated, this meeting was a day or two afterwards made known to Nicholas Handcock, and for a time caused him grave anxiety. The forty monks were assembled together and questioned. Handcock informed them that one of the number was reported to have entered the neighbouring church under circumstances such as would bring disgrace and scandal on them all. The wrong-doer was earnestly exhorted to confess, in order that further trouble might be avoided. The monks looked grave and troubled at the news. Their feeling of security left them. Was it possible that they harboured a black sheep among them? They could not believe it; each was so earnest and attentive to his duties.

After awhile, however, their suspicion rested on Martin, for no especial reason except that, being the youngest and least known, he was most liable to err. As usual, the Prior refused to suspect his favourite, and forbade the monks to harass Martin with their questions, and thus to the folly of one man and the curiosity of another were to be traced the ghastly tragedies which so soon occurred.



## CHAPTER III.

## PASSION EXULTANT!

AFTER his first year's training Martin became curious in manner. His mind wandered. His interest in study slackened. No progress was made. He was subject to shaking fits, which weakened the by no means strong frame. His face twitched, and the expression changed in a sudden, almost unnatural fashion. One minute his heavy brow was bent as if in sinister thought; the hand instinctively stole up to the mouth, and tried to hide that tell-tale organ. The blue eyes wandered as if frightened to fix their gaze on any object, and at such a time he looked the incarnation of evil. Another minute and this was changed. The brow, though heavy, looked that of a clever, not a base man, the blue eyes looked straight at their object, and if he spoke, the beautiful voice disarmed suspicion and adverse criticism. Had a man possessing a knowledge of physiognomy studied Martin's face and its changes of expression, he would have arrived at one of two conclusions—either that he was a clever dissembler or a man possessed of fierce passions not yet quite under his control; a man who might turn out a saint, but would stop short of no crime if evil got the upper



hand, the almost convulsive changes denoting that at present neither good nor evil claimed the man, but that each was struggling for the mastery.

Prior Handcock knew nothing of physiognomy, and regarded his favourite as a man of weak health, at present overworked. The kind but injudicious man knew his pupil not one jot, and prescribed for him the worst of all things—rest. When working hard and his powerful mind interested, Martin's nobler passions lent weight to the intellect, and gave to it a daring most like genius. When at rest and the mind relaxed, the baser passions were liable to seize the imagination and fill it with unholy thoughts, and change the genius to the fiend.

One power, however, the Prior possessed—the power of kindness. Of his inner self and the recent interview the monk did not tell the Prior; but with these exceptions, all other matters were discussed between them.

Oh, terrible pity that all was not told! Unutterable woe that now, when not too late, Handcock was not enabled to guide aright the passionate man to ward off temptation! Many a time was the neophyte minded to tell all, and almost did so after his interview with the woman in St. Catherine's. There was then not much to tell. Mere curiosity begot the fault which Martin was too weak to confess. Formerly the Prior's kindness to his pupil might have lent him greater strength, but infinitely more was now required. A new and great temptation now assailed the man. The good resolve put



off became more difficult to accomplish. The terrible passions had now begun to gain the upper hand, and were pointing out the pleasing downward course that ends in sin.

The one bright episode in this narrative of woe may now be recorded. The Prior's kindness met with some return. Martin grew to revere him much in the light in which a son regards his father, and it was at this time that the Prior questioned him on his former life before entering the monastic career.

A tale of poverty it was—of a boyhood without parents; but in his youth a change occurred. A man of high position caused him to be educated, and, unknown to him, doled out sufficient money for the purpose. Who this benefactor was he had no suspicion, but was told that when he should be old enough he was to become a monk at Holy Trinity, Aldgate.

This was all he knew concerning himself, and of his relations one only did he remember—a sister, a little older than himself, whom he had not seen for years.

The Prior and Martin took long rambles together, and, notwithstanding the disparity in years and station, entertained for one another a sincere regard. But, with many and varied duties to attend to, Handcock did not see his pupil more than once or twice a week. By his orders Martin was put on the sick list, and spent the greater part of his time alone, and having been now over a year in the monastery, was allowed greater freedom, and could go



much where he liked, provided he was present at the various services of the church. And so the time passed on until he again met the dark woman who had given him the scroll, in the same place—St. Catherine Cree, and this time alone. The scroll was produced, and Martin, flattening it out, read the contents and asked the woman what she had to tell him. She temporised, and the keen intelligence of the monk perceived that other designs occupied her mind—another object had prompted her to seek the interview. Had he left on discovering this, the terrible events which this narrative chronicles would never have happened ; but he lingered, and looked at the woman who had dared so to deceive him.

This was the climax in Martin's life ; the conflicting emotions which raged his system, the mighty passions which swayed the mind, and prompted it now to good and now to evil, put forth all their opposing strength ; virtue and vice engaged their forces in a final, fierce fight, from which one or other would emerge the victor. Formerly the conflict had been waged in the imagination only ; no great visible temptation had assailed the senses. Now came that mighty strain on the will, which the mind had foreseen and knew to be inevitable.

The woman had intended to keep up an interest in the scroll, but had failed, and faltered under the keen, penetrating gaze of the monk, and, with that subtle cleverness which often accompanies a depraved but high intelligence, realised that the time was ripe to show her hand and appeal directly to



the passions of the man. Like on the first occasion of their meeting, she threw off her head-gear and returned Martin's passionate gaze. That look was all that passed between them, but it told of guilty passion, of a secret sympathy, of the success of her scheme to the woman, and of the victory of evil in the man.



## CHAPTER IV.

## THE CELL.

HAD the prying curiosity of the people been able to penetrate into the house occupied by their silent neighbour in the evening of the event just recorded, they would have seen her in evident grief; tears, perhaps of compunction, stole down her cheeks, and sorrow at the guilty part she was playing was no doubt felt by the woman. Could she now in safety have abandoned her wicked course she would have done so, but the villain who hired her was not to be balked of his purpose. Whatever her reflections were she was not long allowed to pursue them undisturbed; the door of her room was opened, and, without any further introduction, her employer entered. Angry words passed between them; the woman wished to retire from the hateful plot, but the man was obdurate, threatened her with every punishment if she deserted the cause, and finally gained the upper hand. Being reassured of her allegiance, he ordered her, when quite certain of Martin's love, to make him leave the monastery and for her to be seen in his company at certain public places, which were specified, and finally to leave him, it being the object of the man to bring disgrace upon the monastery.



The victory of evil passion in Martin's strong character at first deadened in him every right feeling, and led him to gloat over the thought of leaving the monastery, and eloping with the woman whom he loved with a fierceness only possible in a man of such passionate temperament. He longed for the week to pass and the day to arrive when he was again to meet her. Should he achieve his purpose then, and quit the monastery and the restraint now so loathsome to him? The conflicting emotion being silenced, outwardly Martin was calm, greatly to the delight of the Prior, who thought his pupil had recovered from an illness, and considering that the time had now come for him to resume his duties, placed him under the instruction of Father Anselm. This was the oldest monk in the monastery, and by far the ablest. With a kindness equalling that of Handcock, he possessed a keen intellect, a great knowledge of character, and a vast experience of the world. Had Martin been placed under this holy father from the first, it is probable that his difficulties and temptations would have been foreseen and danger warded off; but now it was too late; a fiend possessed his soul and held it with an iron grip.

That sense of quiet following a decision even to sin, which Martin had felt, left him under the saint-like eloquence and charity of Father Anselm. This holy man discovered the peculiar temperament of his pupil, and with a fire and genius equal to Martin's, and a tact gained from experience and knowledge of the passions of men, he poured forth



arguments and exhortations of the right kind to appeal to such a temperament. The result of this to Martin was curious; his determination to sin did not leave him, but the thought of it brought untold misery. In a few days he would meet the object of his passion in the great church at the hour put down for him to make his solitary prayer. Would he fly with her and break his priestly vow? Would he bring such scandal on the monastery? Was that to be the return for all the kindness shown him? Yes. Again, did he realise the greatness of the sin? Was his faith still active? Was he to be the one black sheep in all the fold? Again, yes! Oh! mighty passion, like the torrent, regardless of all obstacles, ignoring all attempts to say thy headlong course; oh, fierce, all-consuming fire!

But the eloquent words of the aged priest went home, and though they did not cure Martin of his sinful desire, produced a misery so intense that he feared his mind would get unhinged. Four more days of suspense! He longed for the time to pass, yet would he fain put off the day.

One evening the monk fell ill, a burning sensation seized him, his brain seemed on fire, his mind conjured up strange and awful scenes, Hell seemed to open beneath him, and a laughing fiend to stretch out its bony arm to seize him. Was his reason giving way? His excitement became intense, he beat his brow and clenched his teeth, then, as if suddenly struck with an idea, rushed to the church and paced the lofty nave and aisles, muttering



curious, incoherent words. In his abstraction he did not notice the Prior, and started when that kind man, who had been disturbed at his devotion by Martin's strange manner, came up to him and tried to soothe him and bid him go to rest.

That evening the Prior asked Martin to remain alone in his cell for a day or two, and arranged for a man to supply him with his wants.

Cooped up in that little cell the monk grew worse. For hours together he paced the room like a caged beast, and as each day began to wane, a look of exultation, of fiendish delight overspread his countenance. The nights brought him no rest; he did not cease his wanderings. He dared not sleep; his object was to count the hours, and time his appearance in the church. He did not eat, and the feeble frame got wasted; nor did he sleep, and the mind got no rest. The raging passion told on the wasted frame and the excited brain—the man was going mad! He knew it, but it gave him no concern. One anxiety only did he feel—to meet the woman at the hour and place appointed.

The monk had method in his madness, and knew that if seen before that fatal hour his purpose would be foiled. Those wild eyes, that excited expression, that wasted frame, spoke of insanity. Martin felt it, and longed for his time to come. Hour after hour he paced the room until the end of the day before that appointed for the meeting, when a strange thing happened. Peering out into the dark corridor to see if he was unobserved, and waiting



until the deathlike stillness convinced him that no one was about, he softly closed his cell and sped down the corridors and flights of steps. The monk was absent for about an hour, and when he returned his eyes gleamed with a savage and a mad delight. What was that hidden object which gave him so much concern? Why did he stay his wanderings to gaze at it with such a fierce interest?



## CHAPTER V.

## THE TRAGEDIES AT THE HIGH ALTAR.

AGAIN the gabled house, and the man and woman in earnest conversation. This time they managed to elude the watchers, and depart entirely unobserved. They took the same direction as before, and as they approached the monastery the clock of the great tower chimed the half hour after five, full an hour too soon, but they decided to go on and wait at their respective posts. The man had at first decided to leave before the woman's meeting with the monk, but changed his mind, and resolved to be at hearing distance, in case the woman faltered in her design. He asked her if she was quite assured she could induce the monk to leave, and her answer satisfying him, the pair arrived at the entrance of the church and peeped in. There were no worshippers; all was still, and the man looked about the church for a place from which he could watch the interview and be himself unseen. He found what he wanted in the nave, behind the monument to the first Lord Mayor of London, a long distance off from the place of meeting in the chancel, but the only spot which suited his purpose.

The hour of waiting seemed interminable; the woman paced the church with anxious steps, and the autumn day began to wane. Darker and darker the church became, great shadows were cast over



the broad nave, the size of the building seemed doubled, and one part of it began to be enveloped in deep gloom. The woman turned with a shuddering glance from the dark corner, walked up the nave, ever and anon glancing behind her to see that the black shadow was not following her. She began to tremble with nervousness, and approached the chancel, which was bathed in light from the rays of the setting sun.

Stay! What was the crimson stain on yon altar step? Horror! It seemed to move! It must be blood! Nearer and nearer it came! It almost approached her! A deep but brilliant red, at first a spot, it now increased till it seemed to flood the chancel with its sanguinary hue; then it died away again, smaller and smaller, till it lingered longest on the chancel steps. Why did it not leave, that stain of crimson? The sun gradually left the rich stained glass windows. Darker and darker the church became, but the woman thought she saw that crimson stain long after the black shadows had enveloped the great building.

Would the hour for meeting never come? How long was she to remain in that dark and eerie place? Stay! What was that? The flickering glimmer of a little candle was approaching the choir from the monastery. It became more and more distinct; a figure entered the church, holding a taper. Could that be Martin? The face was wan and ghastly, the black hair was dishevelled, a raven lock fell over the face and made its ashen paleness more



apparent. The monk held out the light at arm's length and peered into the church, and the woman was terrified at the ghastly figure. The face looked like that of a fiend, not a man; the eyes gleamed with a fierce and unnatural light, and seemed bursting from their sockets; the sleeves had fallen from the bony arm, which looked like that of a skeleton. What was that tiny bright speck just appearing under the folds of his habit? She could not approach the ghost, and crept behind a pillar of the nave. The figure in the choir turned round and knelt down as if in attitude of prayer, and a gust of wind extinguished the taper, which the monk let drop with a thud.

The church was in total darkness, save for the little altar lamp, which but intensified the gloom. One, two, perhaps three, minutes passed, when a curious pale and silvery ray lit up a portion of the choir; the moon had risen to witness the fell and dreadful deed. The woman trembled, but felt that now she must perform her task. Her eyes seemed to swim; she could scarcely guide aright her steps; but slowly and silently she approached the kneeling figure, and touched with her right hand the habit of the monk.

The man in the nave leant forward and watched the scene with terrible earnestness. How suddenly the monk had turned round! What was that bright object which he held aloft twice, thrice? Good God, was murder being done? The man rushed forward, but, alas! too late. The monk had seized



the woman by the throat ; a dozen times he gashed the face ; the knife descended with lightning rapidity — pools of blood deluged the altar steps. With a demon's fury the monk then threw down the corpse and trod it out of very recognition. He spat upon the mutilated face, and, with his remaining strength, he ripped the body open and cast the entrails round about.

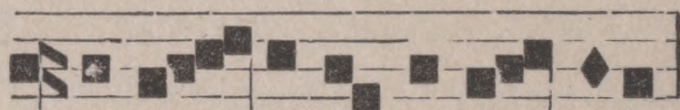
The man who had watched this scene of carnage now feared to approach, for the murderer held up his blood-stained knife in triumph, and, in his madness, called upon his patron saint and claimed a benediction for his deed. Exhausted, the monk now threw himself upon his knees, and mumbled a confused medley of prayer and imprecation. Then he got up and faced the villain whose scheme had been his ruin. His thirst for blood now whetted, the monk would have killed the man, but the latter stepped aside and, pointing to the corpse, bade Martin look more closely at his victim. The woman's mouth was open, the moonlight streamed through the window, and Martin looked intently at the corpse. Maniac as he was, he saw that the roof of the mouth was gone. The striking resemblance of the woman to himself he remembered ; an inspiration suddenly dawned upon him ; he looked inquiringly at the ruffian opposite, and read in his countenance a confirmation of the awful thought. An agonising cry escaped his lips, he seized the knife, and plunged it deep into his heart, and fell a corpse upon his murdered sister.



## CHAPTER VI.

## ANNIHILATION OF THE MONASTERY.

THE good monks of Holy Trinity, Aldgate, were regular in all their duties, and punctually at nine o'clock they betook themselves in solemn conclave to the church, to offer prayers that God might watch over the great city and protect it from disaster. They carried lighted candles and, preceded by the Prior, arranged themselves in order for procession, and marched towards the transept door of their splendid abbey church, chanting the ancient Latin hymn,



Je-su      dulcis me-mo-ri-a.

Ye guardian spirits, protect the holy men from the awful sight, the murder, the suicide, the desecrated church, the scene of deeds which had perverted the hallowed building to a place accursed by God and man !

\*                      \*                      \*                      \*                      \*

The monks shut up their church and kept the fearful deeds secret, but no happiness or rest did they know after that fatal night. Ghosts of the



murdered dead haunted them ; they longed to leave the accursed spot, and atone for the sin of their wicked brother.

And the man whose schemes had worked the misery, Sir Thomas Audley, afterwards to be Lord High Chancellor, what was his next step ? Threats were sent to the Prior, threats of instant exposure, if he did not surrender the monastery to the king. The poor weak Prior, beside himself with grief and misery, consulted the monks, and they counselled him to hold out, and for some time there was a sort of interregnum. All traces of the murders were apparently obliterated ; and the monks attempted to burn out the stain of blood, but finding this impossible, they hollowed out the stone. This done, they sent an emissary to the Pope, and in resignation awaited for the interdict. But whether their messenger was intercepted or whether the interdict was sent is not known ; certainly it was never placed upon the buildings.

Sir Thomas Audley informed the king of the murders which had taken place, which he pretended to have unexpectedly discovered, and the king, glad of an opportunity of repaying Sir Thomas for the salary owed to him as Speaker of the House of Commons, gave the Royal permission for the suppression, provided Audley could by threats induce the Prior to make a show of giving up his charge.

Audley called in Thomas Cromwell, and the two sent another message to the Prior, containing renewed threats that if the monastery were not



delivered to the king, all the ghastly particulars of the murder and suicide would be made known to the people of the city. The Prior and monks now found it impossible to hold out longer, and gave up the splendid time-honoured church and monastic buildings to the king, under a trifling pretext which Audley had invented and forced upon them.

It is but fair to Henry VIII. and Cromwell to mention that they were ignorant of Audley's infamous plot, and had no notion that it was owing to his action that the crimes had taken place.

The monastery was suppressed, the monks turned out, and somewhat later Audley was placed in possession of the building. The poor Prior's troubles were even now not yet over. A letter of his is extant in which he complains that no portion of the seven hundred pounds a year promised to him after the suppression had been received ; but how he provided for himself and the monks is not known.

Audley attempted to sell the buildings, but was not able to do so, and at last he ruthlessly destroyed the magnificent architectural pile ; and, with the exception of a few arches, left no trace of the church and monastic institution of Holy Trinity, Aldgate.

Both during the process of destruction and many years after that event, no one, unless obliged, would approach the spot where the high altar and chancel of the church had once existed. It was rumoured that every night, between the hour of twelve and one, a dark young man appeared in the garb of a monk and always pointed to a spot, and uttered



strange prophecies of terrible events that must occur there. The people got wind of the story of Martin and his sister, and for many generations the spot was considered cursed.

Woe to anyone who would live on that spot ; woe to him who remained there at night and out of reach of help !



END OF BOOK I.



## BOOK II.

## TWO CENTURIES AFTER.

## CHAPTER I.

## RUMOURS OF THE APPARITION.

“**H**OW comes it, man, that thy friend Jack Walton is never with thee now? The tavern misses him; his cheery face was always welcome; and when I think of it, thou art thyself out sorry company, nowadays.”

The jolly, red-faced host of the “Mitre” liked not a dull and quiet guest; good food and drink, he used to say, were wasted when they loosened not the tongue in anecdote or song.

“Jack has gone, and I’ll soon follow him,” was the dismal answer.

“Ye mean to tell me that Jack the fearless, the mighty toper, the jolly drunken rogue, has turned craven and thrown up his employ?”

“Landlord, ye have hit it; the others are going too, and if ye take my advice ye’ll shift the ‘Mitre’ to another place.”

“Fool, take thy womanish fears to others; the



‘Mitre’ and Will Railton will not shift for Papist ghost or other foolery ; but hark thee, Grale, a week to-morrow I shall prepare a feast, to which ten or twelve young bloods from town will come. You, Grale, and your fellow-workers at the stable, have been my friends ; help me now prepare this feast, and lend me your daughters as waiting-maids ; my own lass, Rose, who will be here of course, will look after the others, and see that no harm comes to them.”

Grale promised to send his daughter to help prepare the feast, and asked his host in what manner he meant to amuse his wild young guests.

“ Ay, that is what I wished to tell you. Ye know yon spot, beneath the arch, where the Papist monk killed his sister and himself. I shall take them there, and you, Grale, or some such other fool who believes the story, must recount it to them ; by which time I shall have primed them well with wine. When it is quite dark, they shall all move out, terrible noises shall be made, and as all are waiting for the ghost, my daughter Rose shall spring into their midst, which, if I mistake not, will make them merry and contented with their visit.

Grale looked serious, and thought no good would come from tampering with the ghost, but knew of old that Railton of the “Mitre” regarded the story of the monk as a myth, and laughed at those who differed from him. Grale paid for his little meal, and went out into the courtyard in front of the tavern and rejoined his companions. These men



worked in the stables which were built up with the few rounded arches and Norman columns, relics of the once glorious church of Holy Trinity.

The spot reported to be haunted was just outside the stable, furthest from the court, exactly where the altar steps of the church had formerly existed. The ghost was said to appear on this spot between twelve and one at night on certain days, and mutter strange warnings, and in other ways disport himself as is the wont of ghosts. All the people in the district firmly believed the story, except the jolly host of the "Mitre"; but there were diverse opinions as to the day or days of the appearance, some contending that they had seen it on Sunday nights, others—the majority—on Mondays.

Now though Railton was the only sceptic, and thus formed a party by himself, the other people of Aldgate Ward formed themselves into two factions—those who believed in the Monday appearance—the men engaged in the stables and a few others—and those who swore that Sunday was the ghost's night.

A wag from town, when told of the affair, had declared that the majority were Sunday believers, because, being virulent anti-Papists, they wished to think the monk had broken the Sabbath law, the wag adding that this fact exercised the people's minds more than the murder, which they held to be an ordinary occurrence with the priests of old.

However this may be, party feeling ran high, and Railton was wont to declare the Monday folk would sooner believe in no ghost at all than that it should



appear on Sunday, and *vice versâ*. But he was wrong ; there were solid foundations for a belief, though many might mistake the day, and in after years the host himself believed the story, and held that the fatal spot was indeed accursed by God and man.

“Jack gone ! Then I suppose he has seen the monk,” a brother worker said to Grale.

The latter nodded, and added, “Jack lost his wife a week arter he saw the cursed Papist.”

“But I’ve seen ’im, and nothing’s come to me,” remarked several of the stablemen, and Grale, who was the oldest and most learned in the ghost’s ways, turned and said—

“You may ’a seed ’im, so ’ave I ; but that is not the point. *The man who, with a wicked purpose or to jeer at the monk, stands upon that spot between the hours of twelve and one and sees the ghost, will surely come to harm.*” The old fellow was impressive ; the terms of the curse were not stated in his own words, but were a formula well known to many of the inhabitants of the Ward of Aldgate.

Certainly it was no joking matter, given the conditions which Grale mentioned. A curse did alight on the unlucky person who approached the spot with a criminal or jeering intention. The curse did not necessarily end in death, another misfortune might happen to the offender ; but many and foul were the crimes which this very spot had witnessed from the year 1530 to the date in which this second narrative is cast.



## CHAPTER II.

## MERRY-MAKING AT THE "MITRE" TAVERN.

GREAT preparations were made at the old Mitre Tavern for the advent of Railton's young gallants. Food and wine, the best that could be procured, were in readiness. The buxom daughters of the stablemen donned their prettiest gowns, and looked their brightest for the occasion. Will Railton, Grale, and others were in attendance, all primed to their duties, and anxious that the meeting should pass off merrily.

The guests were slow in arriving—not one came in time. Railton remembered with a pang that the choicest dishes would be spoilt; a punctual man himself, he had timed the cooking to be ready to the minute, and here it was full half an hour behind the hour arranged.

What with the scowlings of the cook, the kitchen-maids, and the fair waitresses, he did not know, so he said, which was in the worse state—the burnt-up capons or his own head.

But at last they came, and all together; a dissipated crew, richly dressed; men born in a good position, nobles, soldiers, and the like, polished in manners (when sober), irregular in their habits, they honoured the "Mitre" with their presence just



once a year, in return for services Railton rendered them in their own part of the town. It may seem strange that they should travel to what was, even in those days, an unfashionable district ; but Railton was a man of weight, a famous cook, a maker of good punch ; a man the gallants liked to please, and secure for their own costly entertainments. Besides which, Railton was a man of wit, and always prepared some amusement for his guests. Their jaded palates liked his rich cheer, their worn-out sense of fun was tickled with his sparkling wit ; they enjoyed their day, and came again when asked.

These were days of hard drinking ; not in the sense in which this degenerate nineteenth century understands the term. Drinking was then an art, confined principally to the rich. Drink did not claim its thousand gutter-victims, as at present. The poor got drunk, of course, but not to the same extent as now.

The gentlemen of those days were careful as to the quality of the wine they drank, but not the quantity ; they vowed a man ill-bred who did not take his share. But just as they would not cross swords with a man of blood inferior to their own, and regarded duelling as a pastime only of the "gentle," so also did they consider drunkenness a privilege peculiar to themselves.

They sent their servants to the lock-up for a tipsy peccadillo, they drew long pious faces at the luxury of monks, and fell beneath their tables every day, which became them as true gentlemen.



A merry, worthless set that was which Railton brought together: Lord Wareham, member of the Mohawk gang; Sir Jocelyn Cholmondeley; Jack Mouteagle, Percy Poins, and others, all in the fastest, loudest set. They ate their fill, drank deep, and joked the pretty waiting lasses.

Hilarity was the order of the day. The jokes went round with every dish, and the serving-maids, though teased to death, declared it bright and merry fun!

When to eat more was impossible, Railton rose and bade them fill their glasses, while he proposed a toast with a song:

Here's a health unto His Majesty;  
     With a fal lal la!  
 Damnation to his enemies;  
     With a fal lal la!  
 And he who would not pledge this health,  
 I wish him neither wit nor wealth,  
 Nor yet a rope to hang himself;  
     With a fal lal la!

Jacobites they were, one and all. And how lustily all joined in the rowdy fal lal la, and how the elements of seriousness and fun intermingled in the then popular ditty!

When quiet was resumed, the host again rose, and with a merry twinkle in his eye, drew himself up, and in a mocking-serious tone exclaimed—

“Gentlemen, have ye heard of our ghost in yonder part of town? I see ye have. Let's drink to him.



Monk Martin, Papist priest, here's to your health ; mind come and visit us to-night."

Grale and the other stablemen stood aghast at such temerity, and Railton, seeing their fears, proclaimed them with derision to the company. A shout of laughter greeted this. The gallants had drunk deeply, and were getting quite uproarious. Lord Wareham now got upon his legs—

"Will Railton, you have proposed a toast; let me propose another: 'Drink, gallants all, to buxom Mistress Rose, and death to him who says she's not the prettiest maid in Aldgate.'"

This was followed by great applause, and Railton, who studied well the pleasures of his guests, proposed a dance, and removed the tables and chairs for that purpose.

The young men who, a few minutes ago, appeared half tipsy, threw off their rowdy gaiety, and went through the various evolutions of the dance with the utmost ease and grace. The untaught damsels looked at their elegant partners with evident admiration, and tried to imitate their courtly manners.

Mistress Rose being the prettiest maiden present, and the daughter of the host, of course came in for the greatest attention, and these jaded men, who had ceased to care for dancing with the well-taught damsels of their own class, eagerly sought Railton's daughter for a partner, and rivalled one another in their gallant speeches to her.

"Host Railton, dost thou think the Papist Martin will obey thy summons?"



"Thou'dst better ask the stablemen, my friend. Here, Grale, will the ghost appear to-day on yonder spot?"

"Many ha' seen Monk Martin, but we canna tell for certain when he comes. But *the man who, with a wicked purpose, or to jeer at the monk, stands upon the spot, between the hours of twelve and one and sees the ghost, will surely come to harm.*"

"Tut, tut, man, stop that silly jargon. Tell us, if thou canst, whether Martin will appear or not?"

Grale feared the vengeance of the ghost, and knew what ill had come to those who jeered and disbelieved its appearance.

"Noble gallants, listen not to Master Railton's gibes! Do not, I pray thee, visit yonder spot."

The guests laughed loud and long at the old man's fears, and began to pester him with ridicule.

"Look. Grale, there is the monk behind thee. Methinks that Master Grale had better don the cowl. Turn Papist, man, and please the ghost, and save thyself from danger."

"Art thou a Sunday or Monday believer, Grale? Prophecy; tell on which of us will come the curse?"

The old man was grave and silent; he did not mind the ridicule, and feared a reckoning would come to such misplaced and sacrilegious mirth.

"Thou dost not answer, man. Did Martin break the Sabbath law?"

"I must tell the parson of thee, Grale. Thou



won't accuse a ghost of crime. Fie, thou call'st thyself a Protestant."

On another occasion pretty Mistress Rose would have thought such conversation dangerous, but surrounded with such gay and noble gallants, she felt secure and happy.

By-and-by they adjourned to another room, where Railton had prepared a bowl of steaming punch.

The waiting-maids now sat down to table with the others, and more toasts and pretty speeches followed.

Rose sat between Lord Wareham and Poins, and looked from one to the other with divided admiration.

"They ought to send thee, Mistress Rose, to seek the ghost. Mine host, Will Railton, what say you? Shall thy daughter go and find the monk?"

Poins followed his lordship in his little jest. "If Martin sees thy buxom face and cherry lips and answers not thy call, then, odsbodikins, if he's Papist priest or no, a ghost he is, and I'll believe the story."

Railton answered: "Methinks if the myth which goes the round be true, the monk will have no more to do with womankind; but still, as it seems to please your wit, the damsel shall betake her to the spot, and try to exorcise the spirit."

The hour was now getting late, and Rose, much to her regret, left with the stableman to find the



accursed spot. Once away from the scene of revelry, her heart misgave her. What was she doing? Going to stand on that awful site to jeer at the avenging spirit? No, she could not do it; look at the fate which had befallen so many fearless sceptics!

She spoke with Grale, and the two determined to hide in an outhouse, and see what happened. They had left the tavern very late, and the night, though dark, was then quite fine.

It was late in autumn, but not cold, and as the hour of midnight came a close feeling was noticeable in the air; the sky became dark; a storm had been presaged for this very night. A disturbing, fierce wind now suddenly sprang up; it shook the very stables; the moaning, soughing noise increased; a mighty gust of wind swept past the ancient Norman arches, and seemed to make them totter.

"Oh, leave me, Grale, and go and warn yon gallants of the night!"

"No, Mistress Rose; I stir not from this place. The monk is coming. Look not on the fatal spot! Oh, save us from the sight! I did not jeer thee, priest. Send not the curse upon my aged head."

"Then I will go to father, and tell him not to come."

"Thou shalt not do so, damsel. Hark! Listen to the storm! A deed of vengeance is at hand. Look, maiden, at the fierce and sudden flames! The heavens are on fire!"



The old man held the girl in a tight grip, and would not let her move. She tried to force herself away, but was not able, and Grale at last persuaded her that Railton and his guests were not likely to leave the tavern in such a fearful storm.



## CHAPTER III.

## THE GHOST AVENGED.

AFTER the departure of the maids, the men drained the bowl of punch, and Railton brewed them another. They soon began to show evidence that the second bowl was too much for them; one dropped beneath the table, another fell asleep, but Lord Wareham and Poins emptied the bowl, and were still comparatively sober.

Railton went to the window and looked out.

“It’s raining, my lord, and I see a storm’s approaching. Had we not better wait a little, until the weather clears?”

“No, no, unless the ghost does not appear in storms. What weather does he generally bring?”

“Well, my lord, they say the monk appears in a flash of lightning, and if that be true he might be appearing in a dozen places now.”

Poins woke up the others, not in a very gentle manner, and said—

“A little cold water will do us all no harm, and if you are ready, Railton, lead the way while I help these gallants to move.”

The men were all put upon their legs. Lord Wareham, Poins, and Railton helped them along;



and when they got outside the pouring rain soon sobered them.

Two centuries had indeed altered this part of Aldgate ward. The monastic buildings and church of Holy Trinity had all gone, except for a few rounded arches and huge Norman pillars which, as before mentioned, had been partly roofed over as stables. Near these was the old "Mitre" tavern, which looked on to a court; and close by was an ugly red brick church, St. James', surrounded with a small churchyard. The scene of Monk Martin's crimes was just outside the stables—a large slab of stone, and near to a remnant of a decorated arch and wall of the old chancel.

The men shivered from the wet, and Poins exclaimed, "The monk must have gone to the brimstone pit to seek the earth on such a rainy night."

But both gallants and host soon ceased their prattling; it was evident that the worst of the storm had yet to come. The thunder grew louder and louder, the rain came down in torrents, and forked flames were shooting from the heavens, and lit up the ruins of the once stately church.

Nearer and nearer came the storm, when a terrific peal of thunder made the bravest of them quail. Now was the storm right above them, and raging with ungovernable fury. The wind howled like a fierce beast in pain, the heavens seemed to open and cast down streams of liquid fire. Listen to that fearful crash! A mighty battle was being waged above; or was an angry God hurling His anathemas



at the sins and crimes of men? Could the elements increase their fury? The liquid flames seemed to unite and concentrate their force; they struck that fatal slab of stone, once, twice; it seemed to disappear, and then a hellish cry—the pitch-black cloud seemed resting on that awful spot!

The men were almost dead with fear. What was yon cloud? Why did it not move? The tempest seemed to gather round it, the lightning struck at it a dozen times. It slowly lifts and utters a hollow, dreadful laugh. Is it ghost or fiend? It seems diminishing in size. Horror! It assumes the shape of a man! What is it that it holds aloft? Again the lightning struck at it, and its ghastly head was seen.

Another crash of thunder, and a naked arm appears, holding a blood-stained dagger. Oh, what is it that it strikes with such a demon fury? Why that final, dreadful cry?

The spectre seemed approaching them; they shriek with terror, but cannot escape. Railton seizes two of them, and drags them from the spot. Why could he not take the others? A dark and mighty mass is moving; it splits into a thousand bits, it flies at them with fierce spite, it strikes and kills, and buries its disfigured slain!



## CHAPTER IV.

## IN MOORFIELDS.

“ I TOLD ye all about Monk Martin’s ghost.”

“ Yes, Grale. We know about the wicked monk.”

“ Well, master, what think ye happened on the cursed spot not twenty hours ago?”

“ Tell us, Grale; ye know we all believe the ghost.”

The old man, with a look of triumph in his weather-beaten face, now got up and said---

“ Ye know about the curse. *The man who, with a wicked purpose, or to jeer at the monk, stands upon that spot——*”

“ Tut, Grale; we know about the curse.”

“ Well, masters, ye know Will Railton of the “ Mitre ” tavern, Aldgate. He asked a dozen gallants from yonder part of town. They came and made merry, and jeered at Martin’s ghost. I warned them not to do it, but ye know the sort of men. Well, in the middle of the storm Will Railton took them to the cursed spot. Ye also know that *the man who, with a wicked——*”

“ Hurry on, friend Grale, we know all that.”

“ Well, when the storm was at its worst they saw the ghost. They say he struck that ancient arch.



It fell upon the gallants, and killed and buried ten of them."

This conversation took place in Moorfields, some distance from the tavern. Grale had left Aldgate and sought employ elsewhere. Will Railton, Lord Wareham, and Poins, the men who had escaped from the falling ruin, probably because they were the most sober, now believed in Monk Martin's ghost.

No more gallants were seen in the "Mitre" tavern. Railton left, and took another inn, and vowed the spot indeed accursed!



**END OF BOOK II.**



## BOOK III.

THE "YEAR OF GRACE," 1888.

## CHAPTER I.

WHITECHAPEL ROAD BY DAY.

IF a foreigner were now to visit this great metropolis with the object of studying it as a vast social problem, he would find it, broadly speaking, divided into three parts—the abode of wealth, the world's mart, and the abode of poverty.

Further, he would discover that the abode of wealth knows nothing of the abode of poverty, scarcely recognises its existence, and even tries to take from it the common name of London; that the West would if it could ignore the East, and succeeds in suppressing all knowledge of the appearance, conditions of life, and difficulties of its unfortunate brother.

If he hunted up old books, and was interested in archæology, he would see that this used not to be. That wealth and poverty once built together, that the poor man could approach the rich, and that benefit resulted to the former from the contact.



That the rich, if unselfish, gave money to the poor to improve their dwellings, and if selfish tried to remove the eyesores, filth and crime, which existed so near to their own doors.

He would discover that gradually, but more particularly lately, the rich divorced themselves from their poorer brethren, whose needs became neglected because unseen; that the two went their separate ways, and drifted farther and farther apart, until at present they had almost forgotten one another's existence.

Then, probably, he would seek the rich, and discover to his surprise that they were not uncharitable, and were the most enterprising people in the world. He would remember to have seen them everywhere in all the poor streets and back slums of foreign cities. He would be told of their mighty grants to the poor of other countries, and their untold exertions to better the condition of the savage. He would hear them describe such and such a foreign city as poor and miserable, though they would not mention the far greater poverty and squalor of the East of London.

If he went into society, he would be led to believe that the City bounded London in the East, that no one had ever been further in that direction than the Tower, that the vast outlying districts were never mentioned; and if he stated that he had travelled in the unknown region, he would be frowned at as though guilty of a social fault. Did he force the subject of the East upon the denizens of the West,



and remind them of their starving London brother, they would refuse to recognise the latter, and speak of him as if he were a bastard.

Then probably he would go and seek the people of the East, and try to find what they had done to deserve such wholesale neglect. He would find a people of good natural character, but hampered by their wretched dwellings, who found it hard to escape from their hideous surroundings; who had waited long for the help that never was forthcoming, and paid too highly for the little which they got; who did not know what pleasure meant, and had sunk into a deep despair.

The ward of Aldgate has perhaps seen more changes than any other portion of the old metropolitan area. The site of the glorious church and monastic buildings of Holy Trinity, it was, in the time of the first narrative, distinguished for its architectural interest. Few, on gazing at the monastery in the earlier part of the sixteenth century, could have thought it possible that so important and splendid a pile of buildings would in so short a time have almost wholly disappeared. Had it not been for the foul crimes which took place on the most sacred spot in the church of Holy Trinity, probably some part of that building would now exist and be used for the purposes of worship, as is the case with St. Bartholomew the Great, Smithfield, a church contemporaneous with Holy Trinity, though only about a fourth its size. But this was not to be; Monk Martin stamped the



once hallowed edifice with the curse of Cain, and a revenging power decreed that it should be destroyed, and its site become the scene of other fearful crimes.

Good men there always are, however, who carry on an unceasing struggle against evil, and in the reign of James I. an old Lord Mayor of London remembered with sorrow the destruction of Holy Trinity, and erected on a portion of its site the little church of St. James, Duke's Place. St. James's was indeed a poor affair in comparison with the former stately building, but we praise the spirit of the mayor who erected it, "as a Phoenix rising out of the old church," and as the quaint old epitaph has it—

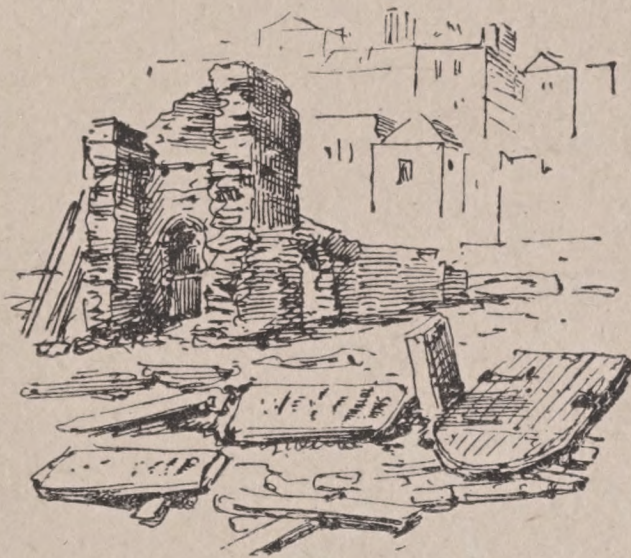
"He never ceased in industrie and care,  
From Ruins to redeem the house of Praier."

St. James's was destroyed in the eighteenth century; it was, however, rebuilt, but finally disappeared about twenty years ago.

The sketch shown on the opposite page was made when the rebuilt church had been destroyed. A small portion of the tower was still standing, surrounded by gravestones torn up and flung about in wild disorder. The church door was lying flat upon the ground, and bits of the pews were seen mixed up with fragments of window glass and brickbats. St. James's Church stood over a part of the site of the nave of Holy Trinity.

It is interesting to note that the whole neighbourhood of the Tower to Aldgate once presented a suc-





DESTRUCTION.



cession of religious houses established by our kings and queens.

There was the great Hospital of St. Katherine, founded by Matilda, Queen of Stephen, and rebuilt by the good Philippa; Eastminster Abbey, founded by Edward III.; the Abbey of the Minnies, or Minories, founded by Richard, King of the Romans; the Friary of the Holy Cross, Crutched Friars; Millman's Almshouses; the Hermitage, in Aldgate; the Papey for Aged Priests, close to Holy Trinity Priory; and others. Where are all these now? A dock covers the site of one—St. Katharine's. A writer in the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1829, when this change was effected, pointed out that "The worship of God was sacrificed to that of Mammon." A huge railway runs over the site of another. A third is covered by giant warehouses, and the rest are built over with squalid tenements, where the poor are huddled together like beasts in a pen.

There are a few—though very few—small institutions where religion is taught, and from which charity is spread, but

"what are they among so many?"

The Whitechapel Road, in the "year of grace" 1888, is a sort of portal to the filth and squalor of the East. Here begins that dreary region from which healthful and legitimate pleasures seem banished, and hard and ill-paid toil to be the lifelong fate of the inhabitants. Stand in the one broad thoroughfare, Whitechapel Road, and watch the constant stream



of passers-by, and try and find a happy-looking face! How dismal they all look; what a weight of care they seem to carry!

Early in the morning thousands pass along, to earn their daily bread. Half-starved clerks, with shiny coats, shabby hats, and pinched-in faces, presenting an appearance of beggarly gentility, that most pathetic sight of modern civilisation. Could we look into the tail-pockets of many of their black coats we should see, carefully ensconced with all privacy and care, a slice of bread which, with the addition of an apple, and eaten in some sly corner of the streets, frequently constitutes the dinner of these respected and worthy souls.

And such as these, with successful tradesmen, form the *aristocracy* of a population as large as many a stately city!

Then, lower in the scale, we see the skilled mechanics, the most useful men of all; but these look gloomy now the foreigners are stepping in and making rotten goods, getting employment by working longer hours for shorter pay.

And then the factory hands, the lowest class, limping to the badly-ventilated rooms to work, perhaps for fifteen hours for a wretched little pittance. Look at their wan faces, and thin, ill-fed bodies; what a tale could they tell of misery and over-work!

And the vast army of the unemployed who loaf about the streets, stand outside public-houses, and level curses and obscene language at innocent passers-by!



Lastly, the girls. What are they like? Are they the types of purity and sweetness that poets love to talk of?—made by the Creator to guide the rougher natures of men unto the realm of light and love? Is this group of factory girls dressed up in ribbons and feathers of garish, screaming colours, shouting foul words, and laughing loud at every man they pass, likely to refine a home?

Is this other group of shabbily-dressed girls, with care and labour stamped upon their injured faces, likely to do more than provide bare crusts for the little ones at home?

Yes, the Whitechapel Road is not a tempting place for a refined Londoner or foreigner, for it is a place where innocence no longer dwells; where the young in years are old in knowledge, though, alas! not of good, but of evil.



## CHAPTER II.

## ALDGATE AT NIGHT.

A SATURDAY evening in the East-end of London ! Who that has seen this sight can ever forget it ? Crowds upon crowds of dissolute men and women jog and jostle each other upon the pavements, and the roads are nearly impassable from the costers' carts, containing every conceivable article of diet, apparel, and mechanical contrivance. The men shout out the rare value of their goods in exultant tones, as if to defy comparison with their rivals further on.

How depressing is the scene ! But what is that singing we hear ? Two big young girls with dishevelled hair, arm in arm, brush past us—excited by drink, screaming from lungs of iron the song last heard at the “ Cambridge ” hard by.

As we walk on we pass a church with two huge lamps, vieing with the public-house lights in importance and attractiveness—and these reveal a picture by one of our greatest allegorical painters. See that dear young child awe-inspired, wonderingly staring at the mosaic which he cannot understand, but vaguely feels is telling of a life widely different from that of his own debased surroundings.

But as the commemoration of the Resurrection



dawns upon us, the streets suddenly become dark, for the bright lights are extinguished and the duped ones are ejected from the glittering palaces, some to stumble and totter through innumerable alleys to what is called home, and others to lounge about with apparently no object in life. Life itself seems dead in them as they live. Half-starved many of them, and homeless; without wishing it or wanting it, falling into sin—apparently unintentionally. How can we blame them? Should *we* be better?

But let us hurry out of this pandemonium into purer air. We breathe once more as we approach Aldgate's comparative quiet, and proceed westward. But why that whistle and hurrying of men to Mitre Square? Let us join them, and find out for ourselves.

There with the aid of the policeman's bulls-eye we see a sight so horrible that full particulars cannot be printed, but it is a counterpart of that which the monks of Holy Trinity saw when they arrived at that identical spot in the year 1530.

Measure this spot as carefully as you will, and you will find that the piece of ground on which Catherine Eddowes lies is the exact point where the steps of the high altar of Holy Trinity existed, and where the catastrophe to the ten foolish gallants occurred two centuries later.

Oh, what can we do that these horrors may be stayed? What CAN we do? This is now the cry of public lamentation and woe!

Is the ghost of Monk Martin still hovering over



the scene of his crime? Is the power of the Evil One still active? or is it the vengeance of the Almighty that has cursed this spot with a curse so awful in its results that no age can with certainty evade punishment?

Who is there so bold as to say that the one bit of ground that has sustained the weight of countless lifeless bodies, during more than three centuries, is not accursed—that there is no *Curse upon Mitre Square*?

\* \* \* \*

As the pen drops from the hand cramped with writing this fearful historical narrative of crime and retribution—the brain in very sympathy and overwrought with recounting the ghastly tragedies of present and bygone times, seeks ease and rest in slumber, and in sleep the veil of the future is unfolded.

*What is that white-robed procession bearing tapers and singing the Miserere? O blessed sight, behold a stream of Magdalens, with flowing hair and downcast eyes, winding their way, as did the forty monks of old, to the accursed spot.*

*And as they approach it, carrying their precious ointment, behold a radiant light is in the air, reflecting a benediction on the spot below; and I see aloft the choir of Holy Trinity as it was before the curse fell upon it, restored by the Divine Architect to its old beauty and splendour, the rounded arches and the carved stalls on either side the altar. Instead of monks, I see, through the wreath of incense, a choir*



*of angels waving their palm branches to the rhythm of the heavenly antiphon—so full of favoured promise to all wanderers in this troublesome world :—*

¶ “ THOUGH YOUR SINS BE AS SCARLET,  
THEY SHALL BE AS WHITE AS SNOW ! ”

R “ THOUGH THEY BE RED LIKE CRIMSON,  
THEY SHALL BE AS WOOL ! ”

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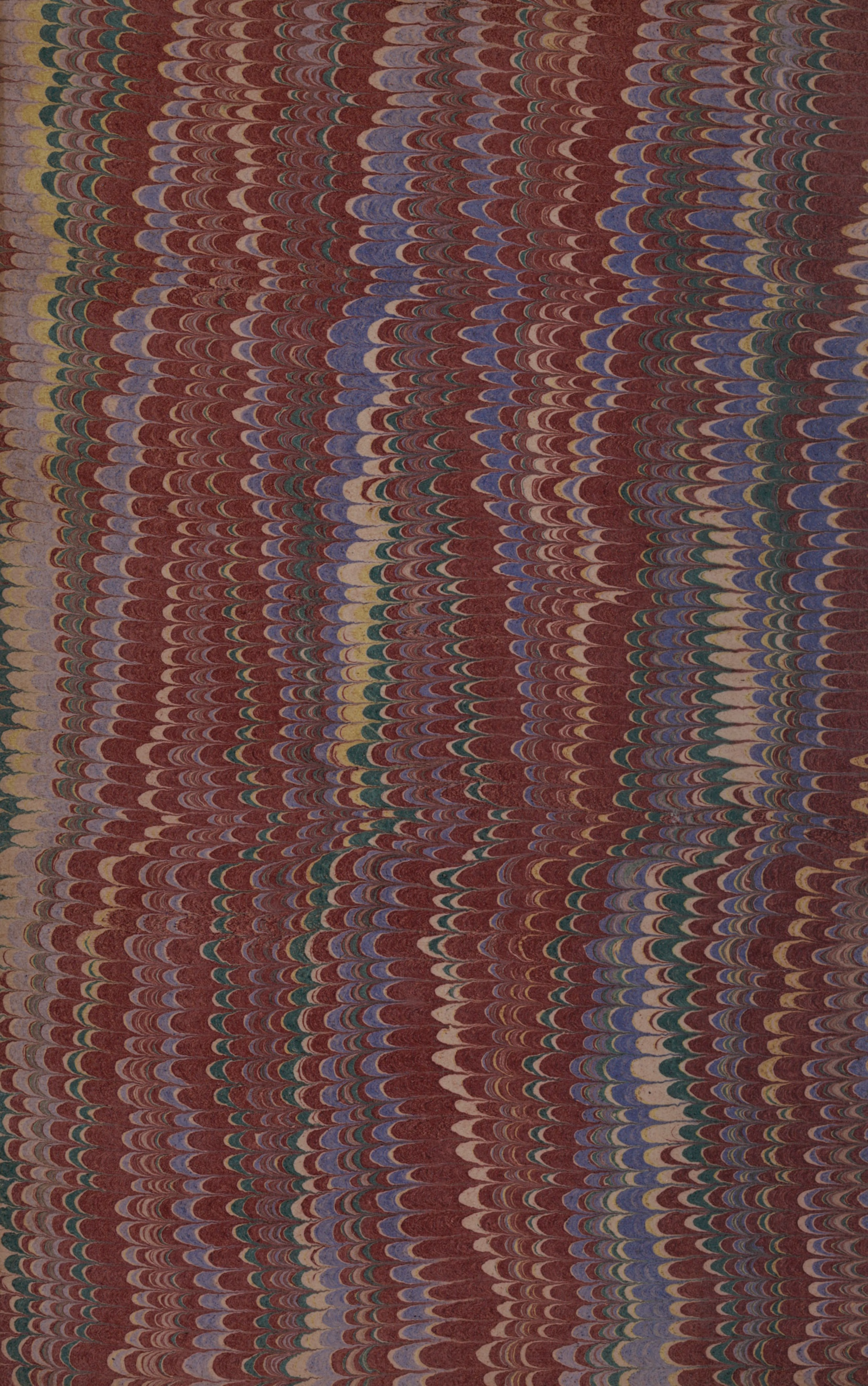




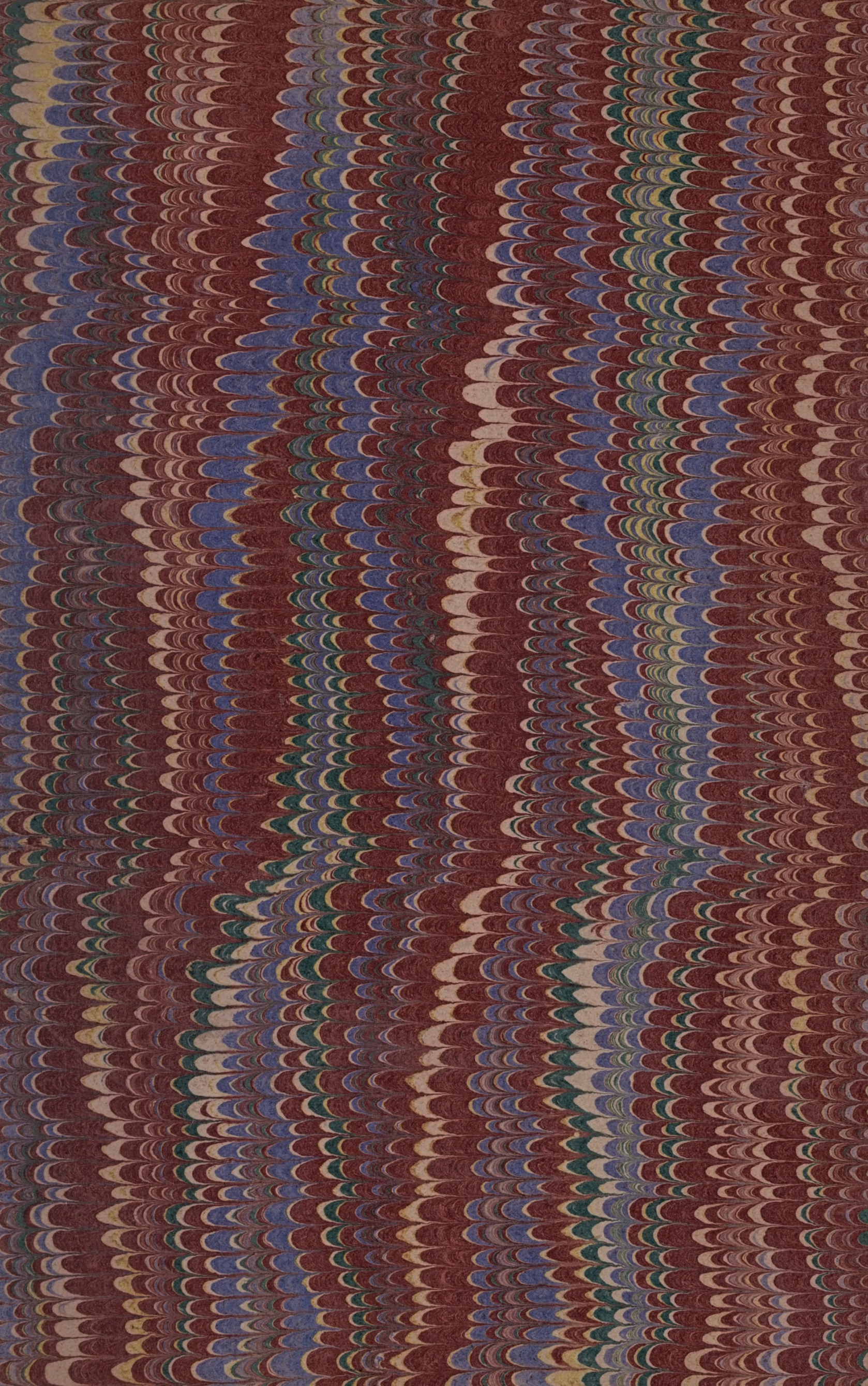














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